

Claim 1 recites a combination of features including “[a] diffuser for an air mass flow controller for fuel cells”, “a first bank of outlets disposed along a second axis” and “a second bank of outlets disposed along a third axis.”

As shown in FIGS. 1 and 2, and described at page 1, ll. 8-13 and ll. 37-42, Bell shows a steam supply manifold having a plurality of delivery pipes being independently controlled by a corresponding number of globe or angle valves. Thus, whereas Applicant’s invention of claim 1 recites a diffuser, Bell shows a valve manifold.

The Office Action relies on sleeves 3a of Bell for a teaching of “a first bank of outlets disposed along a second axis” and “a second bank of outlets disposed along a third axis,” as recited in claim 1. However, as shown in FIGS. 1 and 2 of Bell, sleeves 3a are all disposed along one common axis. Accordingly, Applicant respectfully submits that Bell does not teach “a first bank of outlets disposed along a second axis” and “a second bank of outlets disposed along a third axis” as recited in claim 1.

At least for the above-described reasons, Applicant respectfully requests that the rejection under 35 U.S.C. § 102, of claim 1, be withdrawn. Claims 2-3 and 5-11 ultimately depend from claim 1, and recite the same combination of allowable features recited in claim 1, as well as additional features that further distinguish over the applied art.

Claim 12 recites a combination of features including “[a] method of providing laminar and equally distributed airflow through a diffuser”, “the first bank of outlets disposed along a second axis” and “the second bank of outlets disposed along a third axis.” As described above with respect to the rejection under 35 U.S.C. § 102 of claim 1, Bell does not teach “a diffuser”, “the first bank of outlets disposed along a second axis” and “the second bank of outlets disposed along a third axis.”

Moreover, it is respectfully submitted that Bell does not teach “a method of providing laminar and equally distributed airflow.” The Office Action states that “at sufficiently low flow rates the manifold of Bell will inherently provide laminar flow.” Applicant disagrees. As shown in FIG. 2 and discussed at page 1, ll. 61-80 of Bell, the flow path of the supply manifold includes numerous obstructions to flow, such as stop valve 2, stem 2a, regulating valve 3c, nut 3d, and stem 3e. Thus, Applicant respectfully submits that the structure of Bell appears to provide turbulent flow, even at low velocities.

Moreover, it is submitted that Bell does not teach a method of distributing air flow as recited in claim 12. As described at page 1, ll. 8-10, the alleged invention of Bell is directed to a manifold for the connection of steam supply pipes to a steam boiler. The Office Action states “[t]he recitation in claim 12 of ‘airflow’ merely relates to intended use and is given no patentable weight.” Applicant submits that the Office Action is in error. Claim 12 explicitly recites the steps of “flowing airflow through the inlet”, “flowing air through an interior of the housing” and “directing air through the first and second banks of passages.”

At least for the above-described reasons, Applicant respectfully requests that the rejection under 35 U.S.C. § 102, of claim 12, be withdrawn. Claims 13-14 and 16-22 ultimately depend from claim 12, and recite the same combination of allowable features recited in claim 12, as well as additional features that further distinguish over the applied art.

Claims 4 and 15 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102 as being anticipated by Kaminaka et al. (U.S. Patent No. 4,512,368). Applicant respectfully traverses the rejection under 35 U.S.C. § 102. Claim 4 recites a combination of features including “a first bank of outlets disposed along a second axis” and “a second bank of outlets disposed along a third axis.” Claim 15 recites a combination of features including “the first bank of outlets disposed along a second axis” and

“the second bank of outlets disposed along a third axis.” As best shown in FIG. 2, and described at col. 2, ll. 34-36, of Kaminaka et al., the centers of the respective branch pipes 3 are located at equally spaced positions along a circle which is concentric with branching portion 4.

Accordingly, Applicant respectfully submits that Kaminaka et al. does not teach “a first bank of outlets disposed along a second axis” and “a second bank of outlets disposed along a third axis” as recited in claim 4, or “the first bank of outlets disposed along a second axis” and “the second bank of outlets disposed along a third axis” as recited in claim 15. At least for the above-described reasons, Applicant respectfully requests that the rejection under 35 U.S.C. § 102, of claims 4 and 15, be withdrawn. Applicant submits that all pending claims are in condition for allowance.

CONCLUSION

In view of the foregoing, Applicant respectfully requests reconsideration and the timely allowance of the pending claims. Should the Examiner feel that there are any issues outstanding after consideration of this response, the Examiner is invited to contact Applicant's undersigned representative to expedite prosecution.

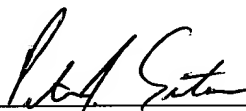
If there are any other fees due in connection with the filing of this response, please charge the fees to our Deposit Account No. 50-0310. If a fee is required for an extension of time under 37 C.F.R. § 1.136 not accounted for above, such an extension is requested and the fee should also be charged to our Deposit Account.

Respectfully submitted,

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